

## ***The Fires Brigade's Night Stalkers...***

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Our Tactical Operations Center is the heart and soul of our Fires Brigade. It's always buzzing with activity. If we aren't briefing our higher commanders, or tracking ongoing missions, we are preparing briefs and planning upcoming missions. There isn't a minute goes by that something major isn't happening with our Brigade cell.

But what happens to that cell when the sun goes down? Does it close up shop to continue operations the next day? Do we "shut down" so we can "pick up where we left off tomorrow"? Absolutely not! Just like the heart and soul of a body must continue to operate at night, the Operations Center must continue to produce. This is where the Night Stalkers come in.

We are the Fires Brigade night shift. We are the unsung heroes of the rotation. We are often thought of as shammers or lazy, but we take all the criticism with a grain of salt, because we know that our job is just as important as the actions during the day. We keep the blood flowing during the night.

Some of our critics claim that there is nothing going on at night, and that our job is just a glorified Staff Duty. Little do they know exactly what happens at night.

Our job starts with Situation Awareness. Even at night, we have to ensure that we know exactly what is going on around our area and what upcoming missions might affect our mission. That means that radios have to be monitored and computers need to stay operational. For that, we have our trustworthy S6 section that is always here to diagnose any problems we might encounter.

We also receive incoming updates from each of our units through the night. These updates are then input into our daily update to the commander. We receive, review, and publish these in a neat and easy to read package.

We are also available to receive those ever important and sometimes unfortunate Red Cross messages. We are thankful when their aren't many, but it always becomes our top priority to make sure the receiving Soldier is notified ASAP.

The night shift also has to be available to inform the commander on any changes to missions or combat power that occurs during the night. Of course this means calling and sometimes waking up an officer that might be a little grumpy.

We are also responsible for ensuring that upcoming convoy missions are ready to go before the morning. We receive approvals from Division, update convoy reports, and begin radio checks before the morning shift arrives. This helps the soldiers working the convoy to have a successful mission. Oh, and some of these missions occur on our shift as well.

On top of all these things, we are still responsible for the upkeep of the Operations Center itself. We clean the sand and dirt from our computers which are always sensitive to dust. We keep work areas clean and organized. And we make sure that a fresh pot of coffee is brewing for those soldiers who need that jolt in the morning.

It may be true that, at times, our job is not a difficult one. We do our jobs at night and also participate in classes and events with the unit during the day without hesitation. We do all these things because we realize that our duty is an important one. And the next time you lay your head on your pillow, know that you are safe, because the night shift is in control. Sleep in peace. Night Stalkers!